

Enclosure, Exclusion and Entry: Gated Developments in Auckland

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Introduction:

Over the past few years in New Zealand there has been a seemingly rapid increase in the construction of what is loosely termed 'gated communities'. As is the case in a number of other countries, no data is kept on their location. They are, however, being constructed on the edge of main cities as well as in more rural and coastal locations, along with apartment blocks on re-developed sites in both inner city and suburban areas. So far these developments comprise mainly single housing or a mixture of medium density units and single housing that are typically walled and gated. To date in New Zealand, the trend towards gatedness is occurring by default and in an ad-hoc way (Dixon, Dupuis and Lysnar, 2004) and is associated with rapid urban intensification in the Auckland region. The potential implications of increasing gatedness have not yet been identified systematically by local government or necessarily perceived as a major issue by local communities. Further there has been no major empirical research undertaken that explores the reasons for this phenomenon.

To some extent there has always been 'gatedness' in Auckland (Dixon, Dupuis and Lysnar, 2004). Like other New Zealand cities, a feature of suburban design in Auckland has been the fences that wall off one detached house from another and the gates that act as a barrier between the footpath and the path or driveway that connects to the house. That gatedness that is becoming a feature of living in medium and higher density developments is, however, a new phenomenon. Typically, most of the gated developments comprise a relatively small number of units and there appear to be few larger-scale gated developments. We argue that, in the New Zealand context, the term 'gated developments' would be much more appropriate than 'gated communities', hence the use of the term in this paper.

In order to investigate this phenomenon in a more systematic way, we decided to conduct a pilot study of gated developments in one territorial authority district in the Auckland region. Importantly, until now, the reasons for the emergence of gated developments have been based on supposition and conjecture. It is intended that this exploratory piece of research provide some solid data regarding the incidence of gated developments in a

specific area and the views of people who are involved in these developments in various capacities. This paper reports on the research which is still in progress and presents some initial findings from our interviews with residents.

North Shore City, one of the four main cities in the Auckland region, was chosen as the location of our pilot study as it provides a significant source of greenfield land for residential development in the Auckland region and is attracting a number of these developments. The population of North Shore City stands at 184,820 and accounts for 16% of the population of the Auckland region; it is the fourth largest city in New Zealand by population size (North Shore city website, 2006).

Research Methodology

The research approach was developed in two stages. First, we set out to map the location of gated developments. Second, we proposed to interview a number of residents living in gated developments, developers and North Shore City Council staff. We sought and obtained ethical approval from the University of Auckland to undertake these interviews. We elected to do so on the basis of confidentiality and will not therefore identify participants or developments by their name.

We began our work by defining what we meant by a gated development. We defined it as:

Gated developments are housing developments which have a gate or other barrier across a primary access. The developments may also be surrounded by fences, walls or other natural or erected barriers that can further limit access.

Mapping gated developments

As there are no records of gated developments held by the North Shore City Council, the researcher utilised the 'snowball' method of gathering information on possible sites. Information on some sites came from existing knowledge bases while information on other sites was elicited from real estate agents.

To assist the search, statutory planning maps were downloaded. The researcher identified any shopping centre on the map (indicated by a business 2 zoning), and visited that centre. If there was no shopping centre on any given map, the researcher visited the nearest shopping centre found on adjacent maps. The majority of shopping centres had at least one real estate agent office, and normally there were two or more. Once an agent was located and approached, the research project was briefly outlined, and the agent asked to nominate any gated developments that they knew. All agents approached were very helpful.

Site visits

The identified sites were then visited to observe if the site fitted the definition of a gated development as outlined in the study brief. In all cases, the site did, with the exception of one site, which had a gate present, but only bare sections for sale. A total of 17 gated

developments were located. A photo was taken of some sites, and notes were taken to record the numbers of units (identified from the number of letterboxes), and a general market value of the development (low end, middle or high value). The largest development is 180 units while the smallest is four units. The oldest gated development found in the study area was built in 1993, but the majority were constructed from the period 1997 onwards.

Location

Of the 18 sites identified, seven were located on sites subject to redevelopment, while 11 were on sites that were previously undeveloped; seven of these sites were greenfield developments.

The location of these developments tends to follow growth patterns in the City. As could be expected, a number of gated developments are located in newly developed greenfield areas on the fringe of the City that is undergoing rapid development. There are clusters of gated developments located in close proximity to the main commercial areas in North Shore city where consumer lifestyle goods and services, such as restaurants and clothing shops, are located. A smaller number of gated developments is located in the established post-war suburban areas between the CBD and urban fringe where sites are being redeveloped or have not yet been developed.

Interviewing residents in gated developments

Who we interviewed

During the months of October to December 2006 we conducted 17 interviews with residents of gated developments in the North Shore. Of these 17 interviews, 8 interviews comprised of couples (husband and wife) bringing the total of residents interviewed to 25. In these 8 interviews we noted that the husband and wife often held different views regarding living in the gated development (as discussed in finding 6 below).

The age of those we interviewed ranged from early forties to early eighties; 13 of the residents we interviewed were retired (including 6 couples); 4 residents were single, and the remaining 19 were part of a couple. Though we know a significant number of residents in gated developments are of Asian ethnicity, we did not get any responses from this group. Of the 25 residents we interviewed, 23 were Pakeha, along with one British born and one South African born New Zealand resident. The distribution of males and females was even; 12 males were interviewed and 13 females. The combined household income ranged from below \$30,000 to over \$180,000 per annum. All but one of the residents we interviewed owned the unit/apartment that they lived in and in another instance all but one of the residents lived in their apartment/unit for most of the year. Four of the residents we interviewed had children (the eldest being teenagers) who lived with them (either part-time or full-time).

The gated developments we visited

In this research project the gated developments where we conducted interviews all had vehicle entry gates that required a sensor of some type (e.g. remote, keypad, intercom) to allow the gate to be opened. Some, but not all of the developments also had pedestrian gates with security sensors. Other developments had pedestrian gates that were not secure, or had no pedestrian gate at all. Some developments had apartments/units fronting on to the road with their own (secured) individual front gate. While acknowledging that this project focused on multi-unit developments with physical gates, we regard the term 'gatedness' as referring to any environment that creates a sense of enclosure or security, whether it be by technological (e.g. surveillance cameras), physical (e.g. signs, gates, fences, walls, hedges) or psychological means (pseudo sentry houses, entrance columns, specific design layout).

Where we interviewed

Our interviews were conducted across 10 different gated community developments on the North Shore. The physical characteristics of the gated developments ranged in size from 7 to 150 units; the age of the developments ranged in age from 18 months to 14 years, and included low-medium (2), medium (2) and medium-high (6) quality range developments (we were not successful in obtaining interviews with residents at developments we rated as either low range or high range in terms of quality). Eight of the developments were low-rise, two to three level units and/or free-standing homes within the development, and two of the developments comprised of higher rise apartment style blocks. Two of the developments we interviewed at had been notified as having 'leaky building syndrome' and the bodies corporate concerned were in the process of addressing this issue. Half of the gated developments where we obtained interviews were located in one of the North Shore's main centres where a number of amenities exist. The remaining gated developments were located in the suburban area that immediately adjoins this main centre.

What we asked

Our interviews were qualitative rather than quantitative in style with open-ended questions and discussion around a number of issues that were provided in the information sheet that we mailed to prospective interview respondents. These issues included:

- why the resident chose to live in a gated development;
- whether they had any previous experience of living in such a development before;
- their expectations prior to moving in and whether these expectations had been met;
- what, if any, issues had emerged that were specific to the resident's experience of gated developments and how might these be dealt with;
- how residents in the development worked together and made decisions about issues that affect all residents;
- relationships with neighbours who live outside the development/community;
- the possibility of living in a gated development again.

We also asked residents about their views regarding newspaper and magazine articles that commented on the exclusive nature of gated developments and whether they felt this was the case in the gated development they lived in. The small number of qualitative interviews we undertook means that that we have not attempted to statistically analyse any of our findings. We gathered an intriguing array of material which we discuss in the following section.

Findings

An outline of what we found

The following table summarises our findings; discussion of these findings is provided below the table:

Table One: Summary of findings from interviews with residents living in gated developments on the North Shore	
1. Gates don't rate	
	↳ The greater attraction of location, apartment living, design and convenience
2. Doing it all over again	
	↳ The high likelihood that residents would live in a gated development again
3. Imagined communities?	
	↳ The highs and lows of community living
4. Security census	
	↳ Gates act only as deterrent
5. Gated development breakdowns	
	↳ The pitfalls of living in a gated development
6. Not all Gated Developments are created equal	
	↳ The variety of gated developments and residents' experiences of gatedness
7. Exclusivity and the Illusive Other	
	↳ The Us and Them argument

Discussion of findings:

1. Gates don't rate

☞ The greater attraction of location, apartment living, convenience and design

We were interested to find that for the vast majority of those we interviewed the gated nature of the development had no bearing on why they had chosen to live in the development. Instead they had based their decision to move into the unit/apartment on factors such as location (including proximity to amenities, arterial routes or family members), design and low maintenance. What the residents enjoyed or liked most about where they lived was the convenience that living in an apartment or unit provided them with. This included not having to mow lawns or carry out other external maintenance duties such as gardening, pool cleaning and house-painting.

While one of the conveniences mentioned included the ability to easily lock up and leave their home unattended for extended periods of time, this was not stated as being more important than the factors already mentioned. We were surprised to learn that in at least four instances (in four separate developments) the residents bought their home off the plans and didn't realise that gates would be present.

So while residents' views of living in a gated development were positive (finding 2), their expressions of positivity regarding the aspects of apartment/unit living mentioned above far outweighed their positivity regarding the gated nature of where they lived.

Quotes:

Resident X:

We've always had big houses – big gardens – that sort of thing – but now we're enjoying the convenience – you can pull your car right up to the door – two metres to carry the groceries and things ... it is really really convenient – if you want to go away for the weekend – just lock the door and away you go...

Interviewer:

Why did you choose to live here?

Resident Y:

...primarily it runs across probably three or four issues – one is location – just the physical location – close to [a main centre] – secondly it's secure – so because we travel a lot security was an issue – it's low maintenance from an owners perspective so there's a collective maintenance of the premises and in our case there's no lawns to mow or gardens as such and then probably just the style of it ... both our unit and the physical environment fits our lifestyle – so it's strongly for lifestyle and location consideration.....this was a choice that supported our lifestyle rather than prima-facie security as such

.....

I think there is within the community at large a group of people who prefer the lifestyle reasons – lifestyle – security – whatever – but certainly prefer that their disposable time is not devoted to maintaining a home...

Resident Z:

*...when we decided to come here.....we didn't know there was going to be gates
...we didn't even think about it...it was more that we were downsizing and the curtains needed changing...*

2. Doing it all over again

☞ The strong likelihood that residents would live in a gated development again

Though the above finding was significant, it was somewhat diluted by the finding that residents' experiences of living in a gated development had a considerable impact on whether they would choose to live in a gated development again. The response demonstrated a strong preference for gates. The sense of security that the gates gave those we interviewed, along with the more minor advantages (such as a lack of door to door salespeople) appeared to radically increase their future desire for gates. When we asked the residents whether they thought the number of gated developments would grow, it's likely that the high response rate that supported this view was related to their positive experiences of living in a gated development.

Quotes:

Interviewer:

Would you do it all again? [live in a gated development]

Resident X:

Oh yeah for sure – this is pretty much what we want – I suppose the alternative for us would be an apartment stylebut it would be a similar format for us – the living style – I can't see us going back to a free-standing dwelling – no, not now...

Interviewer:

Why did you choose to live here?

Resident Y:

Because of the location and the view

Interviewer:

If you had had a wish list [when you bought] would the gated feature have been in the first five or ten on your list?

Resident Y:

No

Interviewer:

How about now that you are here – is it important to you?

Resident Y:

I think we'd definitely look for it again – we'd certainly look at – for a private dwelling – putting gates inI spend a few weeks away from home on work and

[my wife] really appreciates the security of it ...she still doesn't like me going away – but feels a lot more comfortable here than in previous places we've lived at...

Interviewer:

Would you do it all again? Would you live in another place like this?

Resident Z:

Oh yeah – definitely

Interviewer:

And if you had to move, how far up on your list would gates be?

Resident Z:

Higher when they were when we came here – we didn't realize the benefits so much until we came into the community here – it's all very well to think you are going to have gates and how nice that's going to be – you don't have a sense of just how important it is until you've got them – it's quite lovely.....we do have individual burglar alarms....so there is that two-phase security.....I think in the changing world of today where it's become a lot more violent – there seems to be a lot more burglaries – we – I certainly have a greater sense of security here and I would certainly like to think that that's what we'll do in the future if we do build another house or we do move from here – it'll be really important to me to have that sense of security...

Interviewer:

Do you like living in this gated development?

Resident X:

Yes I do

Interviewer:

How much of a factor were the gates when you bought?

Resident X:

Minimal

Interviewer:

And how important is it to you now that you are here?

Resident X:

It's quite important now – it's a good secure feeling

Interviewer:

So if you were to shift again you'd look at gates again and would they come in the top five or ten on your wish list?

Resident X:

Easily in the top five - yeah

Resident Y:

...truthfully it wasn't a factor [the gates] when we bought because we didn't even really think about it – and having got it – we are more comfortable with it than we would be without it

3. Imagined communities?

☞ The high and lows of community living

Despite the residents' strong shift in favour towards living in a gated development again, there were aspects that the same residents had reservations about, particularly in relation to whether or not a sense of 'community' existed in their development. As a result we concluded that gates in themselves do not appear to create or increase a sense of community within gated developments. Gates may have an indirect effect on the sense the community in that the residents of a gated development often need to make joint decisions regarding the repair and maintenance of gates and security, and this increases the likelihood of residents getting to know each other and ultimately forming a sense of community. However other aspects of living in a community such as the close proximity of neighbours, group working bees for communally owned garden areas, annual Xmas parties and regular body corporate meetings also help create a sense of community.

Any of the above may equally bring about a rise in tension within the community and between residents, if there are opposing views about how such things should be managed. Though it was evident a small number of the gated developments had developed a sense of community, this was not the case for most of the gated developments where our interviews took place.

Quotes:

Interviewer:

Is there any sense of community?

Resident X:

Not entirely - I think units and blocks like this can have two affects - either you become close with your neighbours or you become a little insulated and that just depends on who you are and what kind of person you are and whether you are willing to talk to your neighbours - I tend to keep my eye out and watch what's going on if I'm home - I keep an eye out on people - if people are out struggling to do something - I always try and go out and give them a hand if they need a hand with something - on the weekend there was a couple trying to put a bed frame together and stuff and they didn't have the right tools - so I wandered over and said, do you need a hand? - they were very happy that I gave them a hand - so there is that that happens - if I lived in a house I imagine if my next door neighbours were doing something I probably either wouldn't see or...I'd be busy mowing my huge lawn...

Interviewer:

Have there been any issues, good or bad, that have related to living in a gated development?

Resident Y:

I think the difficulty that I've found is that we've had a number of working bees for the gardens and the fence - exterior fence - once the house - the apartments were painted [so] the exterior fence needed to be done and to do the fence there

was only me and the fellow next door doing it - so that was a long hard day and then with the gardening there was only him and I and one of the owners of one of the other apartments from the front here that helped in the gardens - so I've actually put forward for the minutes of the next AGM that we'll bill in an hourly rate for those that don't attend working bees because it's - they are just taking advantage - they've got a nice looking property that has its market value upgraded at the expense of us - so yeah - a bit of bitterness there...

Resident Z:

I think the main challenge here is that because there is no onsite management – it just doesn't qualify for it in terms of quantum – I think engaging fellow owners in the common interest about the physical property has been the challenge...it's never frustrated us but it's ...simply because people live so independently and ...many people travel – as we do – or are away regularly you could say – that's been the only issue here – people actually engaged in cooperative activity ... security isn't really the issue – it's more about just maintenance in the property – garden maintenance.....one way of socializing is to actually have a Saturday and we will go and re-bark the garden or whatever

We believe that the design and layout of a development has a significant impact on whether residents in the development interact with other residents in the development as well as residents neighbouring their development. In the developments where we conducted interviews we found the strongest sense of community in those developments whose physical design and layout seemed to enable rather than inhibit interaction between neighbours both within the development and in neighbouring houses or developments.

Quotes:

Interviewer:

You've mentioned that you know everyone [in the development] – do you think perhaps the gates have provided a little bit more of a community feel...?

Resident X:

It would be very hard to measure but I think it would be there anyway [the community feel] just because of the layout – it's the layout..... on this side [external to the development] we don't really know anybody because trees block them off...

Interviewer:

Do you feel part of the community ...within this development?

Resident Y:

Yes [hesitantly] – but it's limited – because of the design there isn't any – there's no daily interaction – yes we see people – but mainly when people are moving across the property rather than living – because of the adjacency of living - in some communities you are forced if you like because of the egress – they way in

which you can access it –but here we’re not – it’s pretty independent living within this facility

.....

People are interested – they’re not disengaged – it’s hard to describe – it might sound strange but people are very independent because you are not looking in on anyone – it’s not like other developments – you’ve got a pretty motivated group here – they engage when it’s necessary to – but beyond that – really there is no interaction – there is no hassle

.....

it’s not for everyone – that’s for sure – some people will struggle with it.....it’s all about the design – the issue here is that no one looks into anyone.....it’s been done really well – so people live very privately – you’re not intruded upon – you’re not overlooked in that sense...I think acceptability is very much about that – it’s focused around that – the quality of the design – the quality of the actual dwellings – some are very intensive and you create – social problems actually is a consequence of that...

Interviewer:

What are the relationships with neighbours who live outside your development?

Resident Y:

We know them and we talk to them ...but maybe that’s more about the fact that we have a street gate.....we come and go through the street gate – we really only come around the back to park the car – so we know the people next door, across the road – yeah – we feel quite engaged in that way...

Interviewer:

Do you have much to do with your neighbours over the fence? [outside the gated community]

Resident X:

They don’t like us very much because our cat ate their budgie.....[and] they didn’t like it when we were building the garden shed – a lot of bashing on tin – and it is noisy – I guess they were used to having nothing over the fence – this was just all scrub virtually.....you can’t really go over that way because of the big imposing retaining wall and fences – it does keep us all in this area...

It is also apparent that the forms of governance that are used to operate and maintain a gated community also impact on the sense of community. One resident we spoke to stated that while she would be happy to live a gated environment again she most definitely wouldn’t live in a body corporate environment that required communal decisions, payments and effort.

Resident Y [wife]:

...I would seriously advise people not to go into a body corporate situation – and it will only take one or two more instances to get us to say ‘the hell with it’

.....

Resident Z [husband]:

We would have no problem living in a gated community although I think we would try to choose one if we possibly could that wasn't a body corp – I don't think we'd want to be in a body corp situation again

.....

Resident Y [wife]:

What I don't like is about a situation when you are all sharing a particular area – is some people will pay and some people will drag the chain and then you only need a few to drag the chain and then people can't be paid and if you're the one that likes paying on time – you feel because someone hasn't paid...all those sorts of problems...

Another resident commented that in their previous stand alone home, their local 'neighbourhood watch' group had engendered a sense of community, but that in their current situation such a group wasn't needed. They did comment however that the residents association within their development had helped residents to get to know each more.

Quotes:

Resident Z:

...we're all pretty conscientious about picking up paper that blow in – the guy next door trimmed it all [the ground at the edge of the shared driveway] at one stage when we had a few days offwe all just sort of pick out a weed on the way up and the way down when we see itbut I think there's provision for the guy that's managing the money [another resident] and so on for a gardener if he believes it's necessary – I think he would approach us about this – he's taken it on to look after...on everyone's part I guess.....we've said we're quite prepared to pay him but he said he's just happy to get his lawnmower out...

Less positive circumstances can also engender a sense of community:

Interviewer:

Is there a sense of community in your development?

Resident X:

There is now – because in December last year we found out that ... all our houses are now leaky homes – so that has binded us up together...

There were also instances where residents reported that tenants and migrants who did not speak English resulted in a lesser sense of community. In these cases the residents felt that the tenants and/or non-English speakers were less willing to be involved in activities within the development (e.g. garden working bees, body corporate or residents' association meetings) or to observe either the stated or unstated rules of living in a development. We also note that there were instances where residents stated there were few if any problems associated with tenants and/or residents who did not speak English.

One resident particularly stated that she enjoyed the mix of tenants, owners and new migrants in her development. Other residents' comments follow:

Interviewer:

Is there a sense of community here [in the gated development]?

Resident Y:

[For] some of the people there is – it's more difficult for new immigrants who have English as a second language – although we had an 'end of daylight savings' afternoon tea and one of our other new immigrants came and it was really nice

.....

we have four Korean families and they interact – I guess – amongst themselves and then there is three Kiwi families and we have a lot to do with these people who are Korean – not so much for the people up the drive because you don't really see them – only just occasionally in the drive and just wave and hello – but we've quite often been over there for drinks and down there and they've come here and everyone generally gets invited – but not everyone comes...

Interviewer:

Do you think the gates give an increased sense of community?

Resident Z:

It hasn't in this instance – but I know the people at the back are a little more interactive and friendly – we have a lot of new immigrants in this block and they keep to themselves and they're all ...renting – so a couple of them have moved on before you [get to know them]and the tenants tend not to interact with the owners

.....

the rented apartments by foreigners are owned by foreigners and I think they just take advantage...[of the working bees including gardening work down by resident owners] ...if it was coming out of their pocket they might decide that a bit of labour is preferable...

4. Security census

☞ Gates act only as a deterrent

Despite the fact that the vast majority of residents we interviewed stated an increased preference to live in a gated community, all the residents we interviewed stated that the sense of enclosure and security provided by the gates and walls only acted as a deterrent to burglars who intended to gain entry to their private property. It was clear to them that 'where there was a will there was a way' but that in most circumstances a burglar would choose to enter a non-gated property rather than a gated one.

Quotes:

Resident X:

I think it is a deterrent for people ... there is no point in them trying in a place where they could be stopped or it could be difficult ... any stranger would feel conspicuous because they would think that we all know everybody – which we do – so they would feel mighty conspicuous

.....

It's the old story – if anyone wants to get in – they'll get in – we've had friends jump over the gate because they couldn't remember the number – first thing we know they're knocking on the door ... so nothing is impossible

.....

If he [a burglar] really case the joint he knows that he can jump over that fence there quite easily – he'd come over there – pack up all your jewellery – go out that door and jump over the fence and away – it wouldn't take too much working out for a professional...

Resident Y:

...if people are driving past they go – oh look – there's a gate – we'll go and burgle that house instead because it's easier.....most of our houses are all alarmed so I imagine that if a single person broke in – if they wanted to steal stuff they'd have to back a truck up or a car or something and to carry that stuff from here to the gate is too much of an effort and I imagine that acts as a slight deterrent for people who want to steal stuff.....I think our area in our little quiet street is quite secluded and doesn't involve any dodgy sort of characters wandering [about]...it's so quiet – at night time it's very very quiet – I really like it because it's quiet.....occasionally you get a dumb teenager driving around squealing wheels but that only last a few minutes...

In this sense the gates could be regarded as creating a layer of security, while security alarm systems in each apartment/unit formed an extra layer of security. In the larger apartment blocks we visited extra layers of security were provided in the form of panic buttons in some bedrooms as well as security sensors (intercoms, video monitors, keypads) at the doors to the apartment block.

Two residents from separate developments stated that their family and friends felt more comfortable with them living in a secure environment, and worried less about their safety. Several residents also expressed the view that society had become more violent and therefore gates and increased security had become more important. Contrary to this finding was the small number of residents (2) who had been broken into previous to living in a gated community. None of the residents we interviewed had been broken into in their current apartment/unit though one couple was aware of other units in their development that had been burgled.

In concluding this finding the primary research interviewer for this project found that in visiting each of the gated developments, she was very conscious of the very strong

boundary that the gates and walls created between the public and private property. Though all the visits to the gated developments were pre-arranged with the resident being interviewed, the gates nevertheless created a sense of being barred from the property, especially in the instances where it was necessary to request access (via intercom) at both the front gate and then at the entrance to the apartment building. Despite this very few residents reported that visitors had any difficulty visiting them, and presumably visitors soon become familiar with the entry requirements at individual developments.

5. Gated development breakdowns:

☞ The pitfalls of living in a gated community

When we asked residents what, if any, issues had emerged that were specific to their experience of gated developments and how might these be dealt with, the most common response related to the gates breaking down. All of the developments where we interviewed had experienced gate breakdowns. In most instances the gates could be manually opened, and were left open until the gate had been repaired. The breakdowns in most cases were due to mechanical failure, though power cuts also prevented most of the gates from operating. In one instance a vehicle became wedged between the gates while they were closing, causing the gates to buckle.

A further problem with gate breakdown related to the time it took for the gates to be repaired. Though this was not a problem at most developments, there was one instance where the gates had not been operating for a number of months. The number of times gates did break down was surprisingly high; in one of the higher quality developments the gates were reported as breaking down about six times a year. A resident in another gated development commented that even though the development itself was of high quality, the gates were not.

The issue of the time taken for the gates to be repaired relates to the effectiveness of the resident owners committee or external body corporate management company. In most instances a body corporate secretary (who was employed by an outside body corporate management company) was responsible for overseeing the repairs and maintenance to commonly owned property in the development. In such cases the residents we interviewed were more likely to report frustration with the time it took for repairs to be carried out.

Quotes:

Resident X:

They [the body corporate management company] are just inefficient – they are just totally inefficient ... we've had so many staff assigned to look after us ... one person on the staff is supposed to look after us but that person has changed over and over and over...

Resident Y:

I quite like the idea of being able to lock my house ...securely when I go away for work – I go away quite a few times a year and it's work out of my hometown.....the body corporate doesn't seem to be terribly interested in fixing the gate out the front ...I wanted some security around my house and half of that has gone.....there's an intercom at the front which I also think doesn't work – that was pointed out to the body corporate...oh yes we'll have that sorted [they said] – but they just never do it.....I don't think any of the other owners are satisfied with them either but I think ...we're stuck with them for a while...they can't even do basic mathematics – when they send you an invoice...it's appalling – and they don't [just] control us – they control hundreds of apartment complexes all over the city.....they didn't send me a bill for the first two years – body corporate fees and then they sent me a bill and threatened to sue me.....

Interviewer:

How often does the gate work?

Resident Y:

It gave up the ghost in February last year – it was pointed out to the body corporate numerous times.....[but] nothing has been done about the gate.....I fixed the gate when I first moved in.....now it's just died completely

Another issue that arose in relation to residents experiences of gatedness was the delivery of courier parcels. In four of the developments we visited, residents reported that courier deliveries were sometimes a problem, and that if the courier could not gain access to the development then they tended to leave a note stating the parcel had been returned to the depot. It should be noted that this can also be the case in non-gated residences when no one is at home to accept a delivery.

The availability of car parking was another issue that arose from our interviews. While most of the residents we interviewed commented that there was no problem with parking space for them, other residents or visitors, several did comment that parking could sometimes be a problem and that some residents took up the visitor parking spaces, or parked their cars in front of their garages, which tended to make it difficult for other residents to driving in and out.

Quotes:

Resident X:

Occasionally there's problems with parking – people have basically got two parking spaces and most of the units here are rented out – there are only two or three of us that own and occupy and so the people that rent – sometimes they have three cars and then they have to deal with parking an extra car somewhere and it takes up someone else's space – there are a few spaces that are for visitors – but people just use them as if they were their own.

Resident Y:

The major thing has been some people in the rented places have parked cars in the driveway which has caused... we say – well you park in the carparks rather than the driveway – but that’s about it – it actually works quite well...

6. Not all Gated Developments are created Equal

☞ The variety of gated developments and residents’ experiences of gatedness

Though we found that gated developments had many features in common, and that residents’ had similar experiences regarding living in a gated community, there were also number of differences that should be noted, both in terms of the gated developments themselves and different views held by the residents living in them.

As already mentioned in the findings listed above there were varying levels of security between the gated developments we visited. While some gated developments required authorized access at both the outside gate and then at the entrance to the apartment block, other gated developments were freely accessible via the pedestrian gate (which was left unlocked or had no lock). While most homes we visited had home security alarms, in a small number of cases residents also reported that panic buttons were installed in their home.

Related to this point is the provision of separate emergency keypads at the entrance to one gated development we visited. This had been installed in consultation with emergency services such as St John’s Ambulance and the Fire Service, and meant that such services could enter the premises without requiring a swipe card or remote control (the disadvantage with these was that such items needed to be stored at each emergency station and was therefore less efficient in an emergency than a pin number for a keypad). It is possible that the provision of these emergency keypads may become mandatory in future, and be required as a condition of consent by local territory authorities, particularly in larger developments. In other developments we visited residents (particularly elderly residents) commented that they were aware of the need for access for emergency services and that such matters probably required further thought and action to so to enable such access.

Other comments made by several of the elderly residents we interviewed included their views that the development where they lived provided them with a more attractive alternative to living in a retirement village. Some elderly residents also commented that the next move they made would most likely be to a retirement village and that the level of security where they currently lived would be similar to such villages.

A connected point is the varying levels of ‘community’ between the various developments we visited (commented on in finding 4 above). In this regard the elderly residents we interviewed were more likely to comment that their development had only a low sense of community and that a retirement village possibly had a greater sense of

community which would probably be more important for them if they were on their own. It was also mentioned that the younger residents tended to socialise with each other more.

Quote:

Interviewer:

Do you think perhaps the gates have provided more of a community feel...?

Resident X:

No – I think that’s something that we make – that’s not something that a gated community gives us – I think that’s something that we do – we’re a bit social...

Other differences between the developments we visited related to the existence of features including pools (4 of the developments we visited had pools), gyms (2 developments), tennis courts (1 development), on-site managers (1 development had a full-time on-site manager, another development had a part-time on-site manager), and individual pedestrian gates to apartment/units that fronted the road (3 developments).

In most of the gated developments we visited, each apartment/unit had a unit title and accompanying body corporate which was the legal entity was responsible for governing the maintenance and repairs of commonly owned property. However there was some variation between the body corporate set ups. In some instances more than one body corporate existed in the one development. In other instances the body corporate also incorporated the neighbouring development. In another instance the development was comprised of fee simple titles rather than unit titles and no body corporate or legal entity had been established to govern the repairs and maintenance of the commonly owned driveway and gates, though an informal residents’ association has been formed. The point to note here is that the set up of the legal entity that governs the development has a considerable impact on the long term success of developments, including how well the development is maintained and how the operation and rules of the legal entity may help or hinder social cohesion in the development.

Quotes:

Interviewer:

How well do you feel the body corporate set up works?

Resident X:

Well I guess at my suggestion we’ve become more engaged in it since the last annual meeting – the middle of this year – we’ve yet to meet – but really we were delegating all of the issues through the body corporate secretary – they are fine but I felt we needed to engage a bit more in it because the facilities – it’s fourteen years old – it needs a bit more care and attention...

Interviewer:

Is it a body corporate set up [in this gated community]?

Resident Y:

No – there is no legal body corporate – we just put our heads together and decide what's necessarywe all put in two hundred dollars and that goes towards paying for the lights in the driveway, the power for the gates and ... having the pumps serviced or had a look at ...

Resident Z:

One of the attractions I guess I should put is that there is a set of rules and as long as the rules are reasonable – we have not made any other rules here – it's been interesting- sometimes they say you could actually make a rule but by and large there are no rules outside of the body corporate rules so there is no regulations...that is a key issue...getting a set of rules and that's where the body corporate...issue rests – and then of course if there is a manager on site then managing against those rules becomes a very interesting issue – so if owners don't buy in – if they say no – I want to hang my washing over the rail...that gets testy then...

Another difference we noted was the tendency for men to state that it was the privacy and seclusion that they liked most about living in a gated development, rather than the personal security it afforded. They also enjoyed the property protection aspect, especially if they were away for business or on holiday. The women we interviewed also enjoyed this aspect, but were more likely to state that they liked the personal safety aspect, especially in cases where their husband spent time away from home on business. Two of the men we interviewed who spent considerable time away from home on business, stated that they felt a lot more comfortable knowing that their wife was in a secure environment. Generally we found that women were more enthusiastic about the security that living in a gated development afforded them, and were more likely to state that they would definitely live in a gated development again.

Quotes:

Interviewer:

Is it the personal safety as well as property safety aspect that matters to you?

Female Resident X:

It's not property safety at all – it's definitely personal safety

Interviewer:

In terms of you expectations in terms of security and the gates – have they been met?

Female Resident X:

Yes definitely – it's lovely – you come in at night and the gate shuts behind you – certainly someone could climb over the gates if they so wished [but] ...you just feel as if you're safe

.....

at night you hear the cars screaming round and the sirens and you snuggle in your bed and you feel safe – it's very pleasant – a great sense of security.....I guess the high retaining walls around the area as well – that adds to the security

because its not as if someone that's broken into a house can scurry through here – he's going to have a big job ahead of him – so not only is it a community...it's almost boxed in...

Male Resident Y:

From the point of view that if we are not here – then it is very secure [here in the development] it's not something I even need to give thought ... a freestanding home which we had ... if we were away we were more security conscious ... here it's simply a low priority – we know once it's locked up it's locked up – that's not about physical security – that's simply the premises – the security of the premises...

7. Exclusivity and the Illusive Other

The Us and Them argument

We were intrigued to know how residents who lived in gated developments felt about the argument that living in such an environment was 'exclusive'. Some residents responded that it had never occurred to them that living in such an environment could be viewed in such a way. Other residents responded that they could see how outsiders might view it as exclusive, but that they did not personally view it as such. Some residents mentioned that their present home was no more exclusive or any different to previous homes they had lived in which weren't part of gated community. Other residents commented that they regarded particular suburbs in Auckland as more exclusive than the gated community they lived in. It appeared that some residents understood the term 'exclusivity' more in the sense of being excluded and separate rather than as elitist. In these instances the residents responded that they did not feel isolated or cut off from the community at large.

Quotes:

Interviewer:

What do you feel about the argument about exclusiveness and gated developments?

Resident X:

I think people should also remind themselves that certain suburbs are elitist and run their own private security firms around them – I think people ...that's there in some people's thinking – that people are creating their own micro-environment that they can control – I don't think that's every changed since human beings got together in clusters - I think one of the issues that's driving it – is apart from the lifestyle – is the security issue without doubt – that people are more concerned about physical security and property security – but I don't think they are going to dominate the market – far from it – I think they will find their place – whether it's ten percent ...of the housing stock – something like that – I don't think it will be much more significant than that...

Interviewer:

How about the argument that you sometimes read in magazine or newspaper articles that gated developments are elitist and exclusive - how would you respond to that?

Resident Y [wife]:

I would have thought that before we came here - but I think it's just because they aren't very common.....We didn't go out looking for one ... it just happened to us.

Resident Z [husband]:

We didn't have that perception, did we?

Resident Y [wife]:

No - we thought we were very lucky with what we got - the idea of the gate and the view and so on, but we didn't think it was an elitist thing

Another interesting point we noted was that residents sometimes commented that there were particular gated developments that they had read or heard about that they did feel were exclusive, and that they did not find them appealing, as follows:

Quote:

Interviewer:

Would you do it all again [live in a gated development]?

Resident X:

Yeap, I'd live here again - I read something in the Metro magazine about some place in Albany which is way out in the sticks and I would not want to go and do that

Interviewer:

So it's about location?

Resident X:

Yes, because I like being in central [name of centre] and I think I'd definitely feel isolated and behind bars - kind of thing - if I was up there

.....

I don't know if I'd feel a bit shut-in with - I don't know - it's hard to say because I've never actually done it - but whether you'd feel like you were on a cruise ship with a load of people that you might not get on with and you are stuck there and not be able to get away from it

.....

Interviewer:

Do you feel it is exclusive [here] or that other outsiders feel it's exclusive?

Resident X:

Outsiders may feel it's exclusive because probably they're nicer homes ...better off demographic lives in them but - if you were elderly I can understand why you might feel that you wanted to - not so much in New Zealand really but in other countries definitely - you might feel that you wanted to be safer - I guess there's

always the worry that maybe if they built shops and things in there you'd just never go out and then that wouldn't necessarily be a good thing for you ...

Interviewer:

What do you think about this argument about exclusivity?

Resident Y:

I know that – my perception of them was that they did effect a measure of exclusivity – but that's been somewhat modified by actually living behind one because I know we and the rest of the people in here aren't exclusive at all and so I think it might well depend on – there is certainly the American manned ones where you just can't get past unless you signed in and all that sort of thing.....there is some probability that you could well be right – it's just that I know that now having experienced it – my feelings about that sort of thing have changed – I know that A: it's not true if you're inside – it may still be true if you're outside...

Our final point relates to comments made by residents that in instances when their main gates were left open (due to malfunction or servicing) they felt an increased sense of exposure or unease, as follows:

Interviewer:

Why did you choose to live here and how much were the gates a factor?

Resident X [husband]:

Well basically they weren't because we bought – very foolishly – off the plans and the plans didn't in fact show the gate....so that was just something we've learnt to live with – but having said that – we find that when it's down for servicing – one of our less expert Asian neighbours has knocked the gate control out with their car – we find it does feel – we feel a little bit exposed – even though it's the easiest thing in the world to get through if you're really serious about it – you can walk past it anyway because the little side pedestrian gate isn't locked

.....

Interviewer:

If you were to shift now would that be on your top five or ten?

Resident X [wife]:

We're quite comfortable with the gates – we quite like itwhen we've had to have some maintenance on them and they were open – you feel quite exposed – to a certain extent it keeps people from just coming down and walking around your area ...it just deters some people.

Interviewer:

And you would do it again? [live in a gated development]

Resident Z:

Absolutely - if I moved from here to a suburban house - one of the first things I would do is put up some electric gates - after you've had it you just can't go back

.....

for example - if the gate is faulty and can't be repaired until - like on a Saturday - can't be repaired until Monday - we will just unlatch it and pull it back and the people over here - they will say - 'oh! the gates have been open all night - I couldn't sleep' - it's silly - it's just psychological but...

In this regard the presence of gates could be argued as increasing gated residents' feelings of insecurity, rather than the more commonly stated view (as mentioned by residents we interviewed) that living in a gated development made them feel safer. This is one of several issues that we raise in the concluding section that follows.

Concluding comments

The mapping of gated developments within North Shore City and the interviewing of residents who live in such developments completes the first section of our research project. Our findings raised various lines of inquiry which we have set out in the two diagrams that follow. The first diagram lists some specific questions while the second diagram details the broader and interconnected factors involving gated developments. We discuss these points in more detail following the diagrams.

Figure One: Gated Developments – the dichotomies

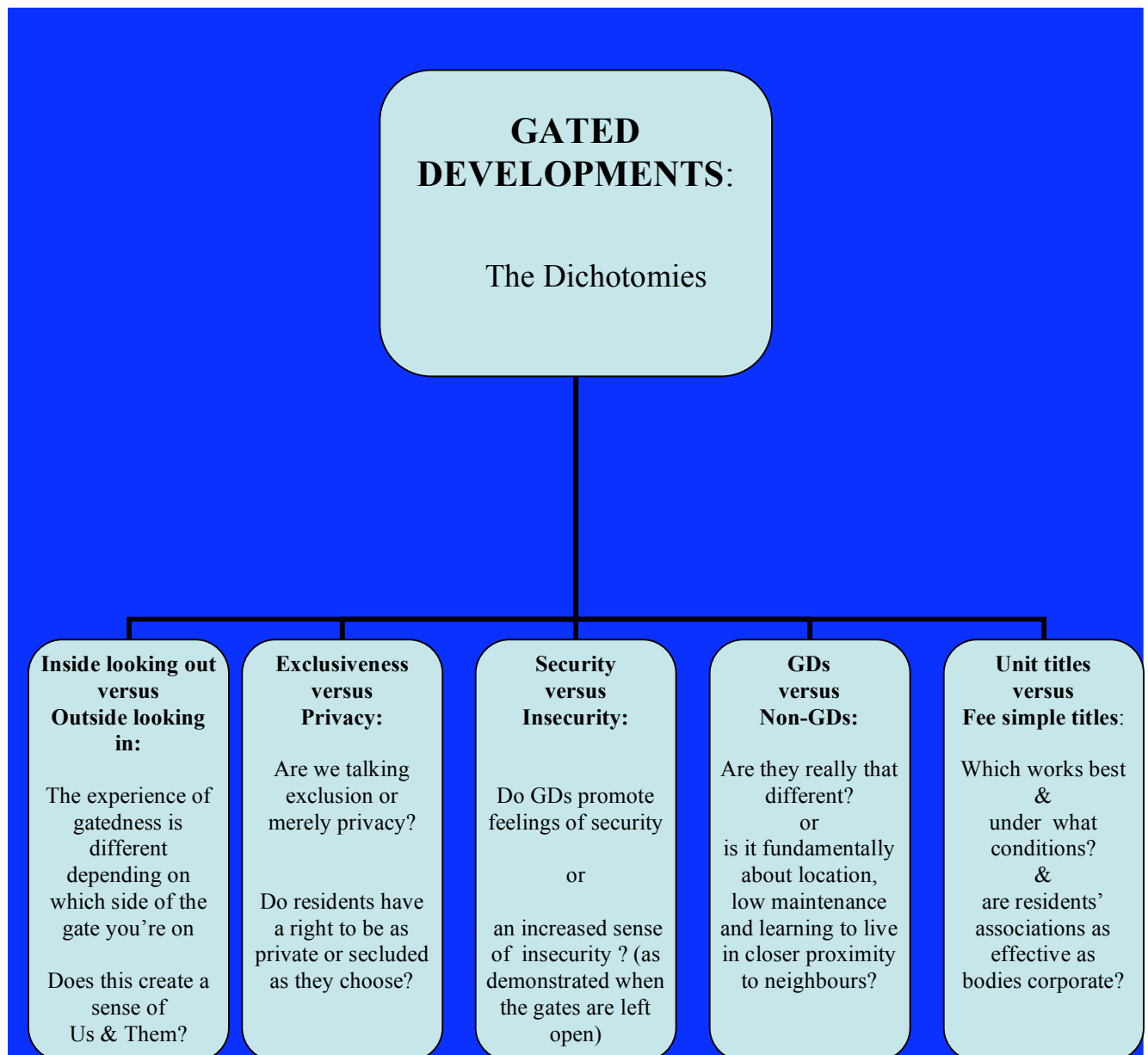
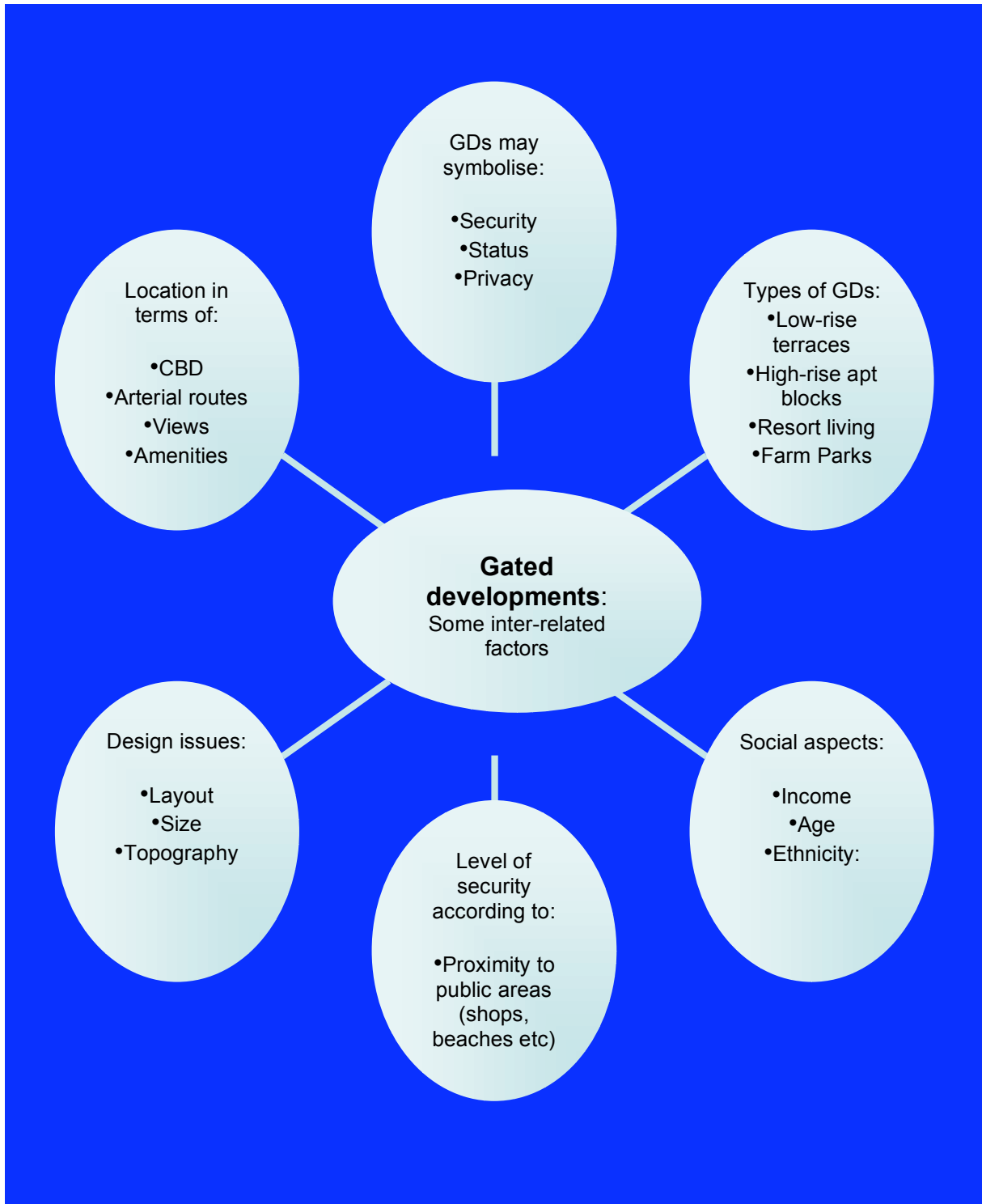


Figure Two: Gated Developments – some inter-related factors



Further areas to explore:

As the two previous diagrams illustrate there is a wide variety of factors to consider in relation to the establishment and on-going success of gated developments. Figure two details the broad issues of location, design, social demographics, level of security, the types of gated developments and what gatedness may symbolize. Such factors are inevitably interconnected and influence what form a particular gated development takes.

Figure one more specifically raises a number of points, primarily concerning the social aspects of gated developments and uses binary oppositions to highlight that there is more than one way of viewing and/or experiencing gated developments. Our interviews with residents bring into question some commonly held assumptions about gated developments including perceptions of exclusiveness and security.

It is these factors and issues that we intend to explore in the next stage of our project, principally through interviews with developers and local territorial authorities. In the meantime we extend our grateful thanks to the residents who agreed to be interviewed for this study.

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